

# URGE

## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

*Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE; [www.urgeoscience.org](http://www.urgeoscience.org)) is a community-wide journal-reading and policy-design curriculum to help Geoscientists unlearn racism and improve accessibility, justice, equity, and inclusion (AJEDI) in our discipline. URGE's primary objectives are to (1) deepen the community's knowledge of the effects of racism on the participation and retention of black, brown, and indigenous people in Geoscience<sup>1</sup>, (2) use the existing literature, expert opinion, and personal experiences to develop anti-racist policies and strategies<sup>2,3</sup>, and (3) share, discuss, and modify anti-racist policies and strategies within a dynamic community network and on a national stage. By meeting these objectives, we hope that Geoscience departments and societies will be able to implement a well-researched crowdsourced group of anti-racist policies.*

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### Deliverable - Complaints and Reporting Policy

Education is essential but action is also imperative for achieving the objectives of URGE. Therefore, each URGE topic is paired with deliverables for individual pods to draft and share. This deliverable is a policy for handling complaints as well as reports of harassment.

It is not easy to speak up about incidents of racism and harassment as targeted individuals or as bystanders. This is amplified for people who feel isolated, without community or support systems. If you are targeted, document your experiences, seek safe confidants, and work on communicating comfortably (“[Finding Your Voice](#)” inclusivity tip). Everyone can proactively learn from incidents their colleagues face through public discourse like [#BlackintheIvory](#) (created by Dr. Shardé M. Davis and Joy Melody Woods) and prepare with bystander intervention training (also in Session 6). Supervisors/advisors should make themselves available to staff or students and should advocate on their behalf. Leadership within an organization can be supportive with clear policies, responsive actions, and effective resolutions that hold people accountable.

Suggested discussion questions:

- Where do you voice complaints? How do you make people feel comfortable coming to you?
- What formal reporting process is available to you? Can you report online? Anonymously?
- Were past incidents reported? Were there consequences for people involved, for the target?

Investigate the process for reporting complaints, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism, and how these incidents are documented and addressed at different levels within your organization (e.g. lab/work group, department/division, university/organization). Identify what resources are made available to the targeted individual, such as counsellors of the same race and designated advocates throughout the process. Institutions may have specific policies regarding involvement of police and how to address impact on courses, grades, or evaluations.

- An example lab reporting policy: [Basin Research Group](#)<sup>4</sup> (under “Inclusivity and Diversity”)
- An example institution reporting policy: <https://www.who.edu/HR/harassment>

Pods should upload their reporting policy to the URGE website as well the results of investigating the reporting process and outcomes. We also encourage pods to post on their organization's website and share over social media (use #URGE and tag @URGEoscience). Sharing deliverables will propagate ideas, foster discussion, and ensure accountability.

<sup>1</sup>R. E. Bernard, E. H. G. Cooperdock, No progress on diversity in 40 years. Nature Publishing Group. 11, 1–5 (2018).

<sup>2</sup><https://notimeforsilence.org/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.change.org/p/geoscientists-call-for-a-robust-anti-racism-plan-for-the-geosciences>

<sup>4</sup><https://docs.google.com/document/d/10y7TP48ik1rcQBPA5Do8mZM7DJ5EbF0hyWP-csqb1QE/edit?usp=sharing>

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### URGE Complaints and Reporting Policy for University/Organization - Example Deliverable

This is what was found by [Insert Pod Name] at [University/Organization] on policies for handling complaints, the reporting process, resources, and possible outcomes. Some information was public; answers that were only found through follow up with contacts are noted.

- **The link(s) to the reporting policy at our organization are here:**
  - [Link](#) - Organization, Company, University Policies
  - [Link](#) - Department, Lab, Division, Advisor or Supervisor Policies
  - Are reporting policies regularly reviewed? What is the process for changing policy?
  - Are the rates of reporting made publicly available (e.g. # of reports each year)?
- **What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?**
  - Who are the designated individuals/positions for reporting incidents?
  - Can reports be made online? Where? [Yes/No](#), [Link](#) Anonymously? [Yes/No](#)
  - Who do in-person and online reports go to? Who has access to see reports?  
[Names and/or positions or "Not publicly listed/Unknown"](#)
  - Are police included in the process? When and how? Are individuals accompanied by an advocate or someone from the organization?
- **What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?**
  - [Follow-up by supervisor, training \(bias, etc.\), disciplinary action, termination.](#)
  - Who decides the outcomes/consequences? What is the process?
  - Are reports tracked? [Yes/No](#) How are they tracked? By who?
  - Are repeated complaints escalated to a disciplinary board? What is the process?
- **What resources are available for individuals reporting?**
  - Counselors or advocates, especially those of the same race, ethnicity, and gender.
  - Automatic or requested investigation of potential impact on grades or evaluations.
  - Protection against retaliation or repercussions, accommodations for continuing work/courses, option for pass/fail or outside assessment.
- **What resources are available to groups raising issues or proposing changes?**
  - Petitions of # signatures trigger a town hall, meeting with organizational leadership, or policy change. What is the follow-up process for town halls and meetings?
  - Working groups or committees with power to change or propose changes to policy.
  - Cultural surveys, regular or only after wide-spread reports or high-profile incidents.
  - Leadership proactively asks students and/or staff for input on how to improve.